

Torrance, California
May 13, 1941

MINUTES OF A REGULAR MEETING
OF THE CITY COUNCIL
OF THE CITY OF TORRANCE

The City Council of the City of Torrance convened in a Regular Meeting in the Council Chamber, City Hall, Torrance, California, on Tuesday, May 13, 1941 at 7:45 P.M.

Clerk Bartlett called the roll, those answering present being Councilmen: Babcock, Hitchcock, Murray, Powell and McGuire.
Absent: Councilmen: None.

Councilman Murray moved that the minutes of a Regular Meeting held April 22, 1941 and of an Adjourned Regular Meeting held April 30, 1941 be approved as written. Councilman Babcock seconded the motion, which was carried unanimously.

WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS

A communication was read from Shell Oil Company, enclosing check in the amount of \$130.33 representing franchise earnings for the period ended December 31, 1940 under Franchise Ordinances Nos. 116, 121, 174, 1356 and 1502. Matter of record.

A communication was read from the County of Los Angeles Board of Supervisors, enclosing budget brief of the County Road Department and advising that the County will consider projects in Cities based on the number of employables on relief, if and when relief of employables should be returned to the County.

Councilman Hitchcock moved that this matter be referred to the City Engineer for study and report at the next regular meeting. Councilman Powell seconded the motion, which was carried unanimously.

A communication was read from Wm. H. Bittle, 16129 South Hawthorne Avenue, Lawndale, applying for permit to operate a service station at 1548 El Prado.

Councilman Babcock moved that the request be referred to the Planning Commission for action. Councilman Murray seconded the motion, which was carried unanimously.

A communication was read from The American Legion, Bert S. Crossland Post No. 170, requesting permission to conduct the concession at the Municipal Park for the ensuing year.

Councilman Babcock moved that the request be granted. Councilman Hitchcock seconded the motion, which was carried unanimously.

A communication was read from Los Angeles City School District, requesting certain improvements near the Fern Avenue School as follows: (1) sidewalk on Elm Street; (2) Improvement of flood conditions; (3) better street marking.

Councilman Hitchcock moved that the matter be referred to the City Engineer for report at the next meeting. Councilman Babcock seconded the motion, which was carried unanimously.

A communication was read from L. J. Gilmeister, Manager Torrance Municipal Bus Lines, requesting adoption of an ordinance specifying that certain zones be painted yellow and imprinted thereon the words "Bus Stop - No Parking."

Councilman Hitchcock moved that the request be granted. Councilman Powell seconded the motion, which was carried unanimously.

A Memorandum from City Attorney McCall was read regarding the Hearing before the Board of Public Utilities and Transportation on application of City of Torrance requesting motor coach permit, which hearing was held May 2, 1941 in the City Hall, Los Angeles. It was advised that the Los Angeles Railway Company and Pacific Electric Railway Company attorneys attended the meeting, the attorney for the Los Angeles Railway Company having been permitted to introduce evidence showing that a certain percentage of passengers were picked up by the Torrance Municipal Bus Lines north of 116th Street, it being the desire of the Los Angeles Railway Company to restrict the City of Torrance from picking up and discharging passengers north of 116th Street.

Mr. McCall said he had contended the Board of Public Utilities and Transportation have no jurisdiction over another municipality. He said further that the Board of Public Utilities and Transportation had made it clear that they considered it their duty to protect the transportation lines now operating near the City of Torrance bus line. Upon request of the Chairman of the Board of Public Utilities and Transportation, Mr. McCall said he had prepared a brief of the law guiding him when he contended that the Board does not have jurisdiction over another municipality, said brief to be filed by May 14, 1941.

A communication was read from the International Derrick and Equipment Company, requesting permission to extend said company's railway siding as shown on a drawing attached, which would entail the extension of rails in their present driveway to within three feet of the pavement. This request was submitted due to the urgency for increasing shipments of defense materials from the plant, it was stated.

City Engineer Jain advised that he could see no objection to granting the request provided certain requirements are met, and provided International Derrick and Equipment Company take full responsibility for proper guarding and night marking of any railway car which might be spotted near the extreme end of the siding.

Councilman Hitchcock moved that the request of International Derrick and Equipment Company for extension of their railway siding be granted provided they comply with all the requirements of the City Engineer. Councilman Babcock seconded the motion, which was carried unanimously.

A communication was read from Mrs. Flora Wright, Secretary of the Coordinating Council, requesting that a gate be placed in such position as to make it possible for patrons of the Friday night dances at the Civic Auditorium to use the recess between the Auditorium building and the Chamber of Commerce building when necessary to leave the building for air, poor ventilation of the auditorium making this necessary, it was stated.

Councilman Hitchcock moved that the matter be referred to the City Engineer and the Chief of the Fire Department for thorough investigation and report. Councilman Babcock seconded the motion, which was carried unanimously.

A communication was read from the WALTERIA Civic Organization, requesting that Hawthorne Boulevard from Highway 101 to the boundary line of Torrance and Palos Verdes be repaired.

Councilman Babcock moved that the matter be referred to the Street Department. Councilman Murray seconded the motion, which was carried unanimously.

A communication was read from the Municipal Finance Officers' Association, requesting the Council to adopt a Resolution commemorating the 400th anniversary of California's discovery.

A sample resolution was enclosed, which Clerk Bartlett read in full, being Resolution No. 1445.

RESOLUTION NO. 1445

RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE
CITY OF TORRANCE PETITIONING THE STATE
LEGISLATURE TO COMMEMORATE THE FOUR
HUNDREDTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE DISCOVERY
OF CALIFORNIA

Councilman Babcock moved that Resolution No. 1445 be adopted. Councilman Hitchcock seconded the motion, which was carried by the following roll call vote: AYES: COUNCILMEN: Babcock, Hitchcock, Murray, Powell and McGuire. NOES: COUNCILMEN: None. ABSENT: COUNCILMEN: None.

A communication was read from Norma Anderson, 2319 Maricopa Street, requesting removal of two acacia trees from the front of 2319 Maricopa Street.

Councilman Babcock moved that the request be referred to the Street Department. Councilman Murray seconded the motion.

Councilman Hitchcock offered a substitute motion that the request be referred to the City Council as a whole. Councilman Babcock seconded the motion, which motion failed to carry.

A roll call vote was taken on the original motion to refer the request to the Street Department, the vote being as follows: AYES: COUNCILMEN: Babcock, Murray, Powell and McGuire. NOES: COUNCILMEN: Hitchcock. ABSENT: COUNCIL: None.

Two communications were read from V. W. Coil, Torrance Coordinating Council, advising that lack of attendance at the dances held April 25, 1941 and May 2, 1941 make it necessary to omit payment of rent of auditorium.

Mayor McGuire suggested that it might be advisable to ask Mr. Coil to submit a financial statement for the abovementioned dates.

After a short discussion, Clerk Bartlett was instructed to direct a letter to Mr. Coil, asking him to submit a financial statement of the dances for the dates abovementioned.

A communication from the Los Angeles County Road Department was read, advising that a certain resolution was not introduced at the meeting of the Board of Supervisors on May 8, 1941, and stating that claim to the County Auditor for payment in accordance with the City of Torrance request will be made immediately action is taken on the resolution. The communication was addressed to City Engineer Jain. Mr. Bartlett explained that the resolution referred to is the one wherein

the City of Torrance requested the Board of Supervisors of the County of Los Angeles to authorize an appropriation of \$8055.00 for the acquisition of Pacific Electric right of way on Cabrillo Avenue from Torrance Boulevard to Plaza del Amo. (Resolution No. 1434)

A communication was read from the City of Pasadena, urging the City of Torrance to endorse the proposed California Parkway Authority Act, known as A. B. 2609.

Engineer Jain said that he had studied the matter somewhat, but could offer no definite recommendation. He said, however, that his understanding is that few small cities have endorsed the act as requested.

Councilman Hitchcock moved that the matter be deferred for more comprehensive study. Councilman Babcock seconded the motion, which was carried unanimously.

A communication was read from H. W. Slover, tendering his resignation from the position of business license collector, said resignation to be effective on June 1, 1941, with vacation period allowed, said period to begin May 16, 1941. Claim was presented for payment of \$4.00 for each Friday night for a period of one year, representing time during which Mr. Slover was assigned to duty at the Civic Auditorium during dances, for which no compensation was received, stated Mr. Slover.

Councilman Powell moved that the resignation of H. W. Slover, effective June 1, 1941, be accepted and that the claim for payment of extra time be referred to the Council as a whole. Councilman Murray seconded the motion, which was carried by the following roll call vote: AYES: COUNCILMEN: Babcock, Hitchcock, Murray, Powell and McGuire. NOES: COUNCILMEN: None. ABSENT: COUNCILMEN: None.

It was agreed that a time for meeting for discussion of this matter would be arranged in the near future.

A newspaper clipping, pasted on a sheet of paper, and addressed to the City Council, signed by George Bumpus, Secretary Torrance Recall Committee, was read, condemning the action of the City Council in refusing the use of the Chamber of Commerce building to said committee.

Councilman Hitchcock moved that the communication be filed. Councilman Babcock seconded the motion, which was carried unanimously.

Clerk Bartlett presented and read title to:

RESOLUTION NO. 1446

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE CITY OF TORRANCE TO ENTER INTO THE ANNEXED AGREEMENT WITH KRYNE VAN den AKKER, AN ATTORNEY.

Councilman Hitchcock moved that Resolution No. 1446 be adopted. Councilman Babcock seconded the motion, which was carried by the following roll call vote: AYES: COUNCILMEN: Babcock, Hitchcock, Murray, Powell and McGuire. NOES: COUNCILMEN: None. ABSENT: COUNCILMEN: None.

Clerk Bartlett presented and read title to:

RESOLUTION NO. 1447

A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF TORRANCE APPROVING SETTLEMENTS OF INDEBTEDNESS IN DISTRICTS CREATED UNDER THE "IMPROVEMENT BOND ACT OF 1915" AND ORDERING THE CANCELLATION OF SAID ASSESSMENTS ON THE BOOKS OF THE COUNTY AUDITOR.

Councilman Hitchcock moved that Resolution No. 1447 be adopted.

Councilman Babcock seconded the motion, which was carried by the following roll call vote: AYES: COUNCILMEN: Babcock, Hitchcock, Murray, Powell and McGuire. NOES: COUNCILMEN: None. ABSENT: COUNCILMEN: None.

Clerk Bartlett presented and read title to:

RESOLUTION NO. 1448

A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF TORRANCE APPROVING SETTLEMENT COVERING LIQUIDATION OF INDEBTEDNESS OF 1915 ACT DISTRICTS.

Councilman Babcock moved that Resolution No. 1448 be adopted. Councilman Hitchcock seconded the motion, which was carried by the following roll call vote: AYES: COUNCILMEN: Babcock, Hitchcock, Murray, Powell and McGuire. NOES: COUNCILMEN: None. ABSENT: COUNCILMEN: None.

A communication was read from the Associated Assessment Engineers, requesting the City of Torrance to adopt a procedural ordinance providing for the manner of sale of tax dedeed lands. A sample ordinance was enclosed. The request was made that the Council study this ordinance and arrange a meeting with Associated Assessment Engineers for discussion of this and other matters.

Councilman Babcock moved that the matter be deferred for further study, a special meeting to be called for adoption of the ordinance if necessary. Councilman Hitchcock seconded the motion, which was carried unanimously.

Mr. B. R. Greig of the Associated Assessment Engineers informed that the ordinance had been presented for study and adoption within approximately one week would be quite satisfactory.

Clerk Bartlett presented and read title to:

RESOLUTION NO. 1449

RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF TORRANCE AUTHORIZING THE MAYOR AND THE CITY ENGINEER TO SIGN PROJECT AGREEMENT WITH WORKS PROJECT ADMINISTRATION FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF TORRANCE BOULEVARD.

Councilman Hitchcock moved that Resolution No. 1449 be adopted. Councilman Babcock seconded the motion, which was carried by the following roll call vote: AYES: COUNCILMEN: Babcock, Hitchcock, Murray, Powell and McGuire. NOES: COUNCILMEN: None. ABSENT: COUNCILMEN: None.

Clerk Bartlett presented and read title to:

RESOLUTION NO. 1450

RESOLUTION APPROVING ALLOCATION OF CERTAIN FUNDS AND USE THEREOF IN RETIREMENT OF INDEBTEDNESS OF ACQUISITION AND IMPROVEMENT DISTRICTS NOS. 122 AND 213 OF THE COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA.

Councilman Babcock moved that Resolution No. 1450 be adopted. Councilman Murray seconded the motion, which was carried by the following roll call vote: AYES: COUNCILMEN: Babcock, Hitchcock, Murray, Powell and McGuire. NOES: COUNCILMEN: None. ABSENT: COUNCILMEN: None.

Clerk Bartlett presented for final reading:

ORDINANCE NO. 324

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF TORRANCE, CALIFORNIA
ESTABLISHING CERTAIN HEALTH AND SANITARY REGULATIONS
WITHIN THE SAID CITY, AND PROVIDING FOR THE
ENFORCEMENT THEREOF, AND REPEALING ORDINANCE NO.
299 AND ALL OTHER ORDINANCES OR PARTS OF ORDINANCES
IN CONFLICT HEREWITH.

Councilman Babcock moved that further reading of Ordinance No. 324 be dispensed with. Councilman Hitchcock seconded the motion, which was carried unanimously.

Councilman Babcock moved that Ordinance No. 324 be adopted for final reading. Councilman Hitchcock seconded the motion, which was carried by the following roll call vote: AYES: COUNCILMEN: Babcock, Hitchcock, Murray, Powell and McGuire. NOES: COUNCILMEN: None. ABSENT: COUNCILMEN: None.

Clerk Bartlett presented for first reading:

ORDINANCE NO. 325

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF TORRANCE AMENDING
ORDINANCE NO. 275 BY ADDING THERETO SUBSECTION G.

Councilman Babcock moved that Ordinance No. 325 be adopted for first reading. Councilman Murray seconded the motion, which was carried by the following roll call vote: AYES: COUNCILMEN: Babcock, Hitchcock, Murray, Powell and McGuire. NOES: COUNCILMEN: None. ABSENT: COUNCILMEN: None.

Clerk Bartlett presented for first reading;

ORDINANCE NO. 326

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF TORRANCE
CREATING AND ESTABLISHING A CIVIL SERVICE
SYSTEM FOR SAID CITY.

At the request of Councilman Babcock, Attorney McCall gave a brief outline of the Ordinance, reading Section 3 in full.

Councilman Babcock moved that Ordinance No. 326 be adopted for first reading. Councilman Murray seconded the motion, which was carried by the following roll call vote: AYES: COUNCILMEN: Babcock, Hitchcock, Murray, Powell and McGuire. NOES: COUNCILMEN: None. ABSENT: COUNCILMEN: None.

An Audit Report of the City Court of the City of Torrance for the period October 16, 1934 to March 31, 1941 submitted by City Auditor, Logan R. Cotton, was read by Clerk Bartlett.

Councilman Powell moved that the Audit Report as read be accepted and referred to the City Council as a whole for study and report at the next regular meeting. Councilman Murray seconded the motion, which was carried unanimously.

City Engineer Jain, commenting upon the request of Wm. H. Bittle for permit to operate a service station at 1548 El Prado, informed that, although the district is in the single family residence zone, the service station, under another management, had been operating at the time the zoning ordinance was adopted, but had been closed for a period of approximately five months. He asked Attorney McCall to give a ruling as to how much time could elapse between the time one person

closes a business and another person opens said business before the Planning Commission should consider the business permanently closed, since businesses in operation at the time the zoning ordinance was adopted cannot be affected by the zoning restrictions.

Attorney McCall advised that this matter should be acted upon by the Planning Commission in any event.

In connection with the communication from the Los Angeles County Road Department advising that a certain resolution was not introduced at the meeting of the Board of Supervisors on May 8, 1941, Engineer Jain said he had requested this especially, advising that action was desired by the City of Torrance as soon as possible.

Engineer Jain said he and Mr. Butterfield, City Electrician, had investigated the lighting condition on 190th Street at the entrance to the General Petroleum Corporation refinery, and recommended that a sodium vapor light be installed. He said the Edison Company would install same at the usual rate of \$5.50 per month.

Councilman Hitchcock moved that the Southern California Edison Company, Ltd. be authorized to install a sodium vapor light on 190th Street at the entrance to the General Petroleum Corporation refinery. Councilman Powell seconded the motion, which was carried by the following roll call vote: AYES: COUNCILMEN: Babcock, Hitchcock, Murray, Powell and McGuire. NOES: COUNCILMEN: None. ABSENT: COUNCILMEN: None.

Mr. Jain reported that he, Mr. Stanger and Mr. Hitchcock had been contacted by a number of North Torrance people regarding the problem of supplying water to fifteen residents in North Torrance whose water supply was cut off with the collapse of Crown Water Company. Upon request of the people, he said, he had contacted a number of drillers, who estimated that the cost to drill a well to a depth of 230 feet would be approximately \$850.00. The drillers had expressed the opinion, however, added Mr. Jain, that a deeper well would be necessary due to changes in water levels. He said he had checked with a number of tank companies, who gave prices on steel tanks and towers and wooden tanks and towers at \$950.00. To replace with a new well, using the old pump and the old distributing system, total cost would amount at approximately \$1800.00, said Mr. Jain. Mr. Jain said he had received a report from North Torrance residents, who expressed willingness to form a new company and disregard Crown Water Company altogether.

Mr. Logan R. Cotton, City Auditor, informed that, due to other business engagements, it would be necessary for him to leave at this time.

Councilman Babcock asked Mr. Cotton "at the close of what month was your first audit of the City of Torrance books made?", Mr. Cotton answering, "September 30, 1940".

Councilman Babcock next inquired of Mr. Cotton, "after completing said audit did you request the Mayor to call the Council together for a conference with you?", the answer being in the affirmative. The next question asked by Councilman Babcock was regarding the number of Councilmen present at the conference, Mr. Cotton replying that he believed all five Councilmen were present.

Councilman Babcock then inquired "what, if anything, was said at that meeting in regards to the Judge's books?"

Mr. Cotton answered, "it is very difficult to renumerate everything said with regards to various departments. I suggested that we revamp the Judge's setup - that it was not adaptable to auditing and the records were not efficiently kept, in my opinion."

Councilman Murray asked Mr. Cotton who should be the custodian of dockets. Mr. Cotton informed that, inasmuch as the Judge is the official representative of the City Court department, he should be the custodian of the dockets.

Mr. Cotton informed that questions submitted to the City Council in writing will be answered by him in writing.

Mr. James O'Toole attempted to question Mr. Cotton. Mr. Cotton repeated the above statement and left.

Councilman Powell moved that an appropriation of not to exceed \$69.50, plus sales tax, less \$15.00 trade-in allowance on portable Underwood typewriter, be made for a typewriter for the City Judge's office. Councilman Murray seconded the motion, which was carried by the following roll call vote: AYES: COUNCILMEN: Babcock, Hitchcock, Murray, Powell and McGuire. NOES: COUNCILMEN: None. ABSENT: COUNCILMEN: None.

Councilman Powell moved that the appointment of Karl Frieberg to serve on the Police Department force during vacation period be authorized. Councilman Babcock seconded the motion, which was carried by the following roll call vote: AYES: COUNCILMEN: Babcock, Hitchcock, Murray, Powell and McGuire. NOES: COUNCILMEN: None. ABSENT: COUNCILMEN: None.

Councilman Powell announced that the audit report of the City Court submitted by Logan R. Cotton and read at this meeting is on file in the office of the City Clerk, and is available for anyone desiring to examine it.

Councilman Powell read the following statement:

"When I asked for the removal of Mr. Lessing from the office of Police Judge, I was in sympathy for other members of his family, but it seems to me that this was not appreciated by Mr. Lessing and some of his friends. Maybe they are misinformed or perhaps they just want to be blind to the facts.

I am again having the reason for his removal read in the minutes of this meeting. Before Mr. Lessing was dismissed, I asked Mr. McGuire to call Mr. Lessing to meet with the members of the Council, which he did. I informed Mr. Lessing at that time that because of his past record in office, he was through, at which time I offered to let him resign with his vacation, effective April 15. We were told by Mr. Lessing that we could not remove him from office. When I took the oath of office, as other members of the Council did, we swore to protect the property and all revenues of this City, and I mean to do just that to the best of my ability. It is my understanding of the law that anyone guilty of violating his oath of office is subject to removal by the Courts, and it is just grounds for recall from office. No bank or businessman worthy of the name would tolerate any such conduct by one of their employees for one minute who would abuse such a position of trust.

In my opinion, it seems incredible that other members of the official family who were in a position to have detected that something was wrong long before the shortage had reached the seventeen hundred dollar mark, especially when the Auditor was required to give a quarterly report, allowed the shortage to run for a period of over eight months. When the Auditor did report, he only reported to the Finance Committee, after which it was almost one year before Mr. McGuire, in answer to my question of Mr. Lessing's shortage, admitted that there was a shortage. Nevertheless Mr. Hitchcock has stated in public that he knew of no reason for dismissal of Mr. Lessing.

There is another case that I am very much interested in. In the purchase of the local water system, there was about \$38,000.00 that was not classified. Every other item of the deal was classified showing what the money was spent for. That is a lot of money not to be classified, and I would like to know what it went for." I am intending to find out if I can.

Councilman Hitchcock moved that an appropriation of not to exceed \$308.94 be made for materials for sidewalk, alley and street repairs. Councilman Babcock seconded the motion, which was carried by the following roll call vote: AYES: COUNCILMEN: Babcock, Hitchcock, Murray, Powell and McGuire. NOES: COUNCILMEN: None. ABSENT: COUNCILMEN: None.

Councilman Babcock asked Clerk Bartlett the following question: "Mr. Bartlett, have you in your custody a report by the former Auditor, Mr. Rambo, concerning the Judge's records at the time the difficulty arose several months ago?" Mr. Bartlett's answer was in the negative. Councilman Babcock's next question was "Have you ever seen such report?" Mr. Bartlett answered "no". Councilman Babcock then inquired, "Could you tell me how they arrived at the balance due without making an audit?" Clerk Bartlett replied, "I haven't any idea what they did."

Mayor McGuire moved that an appropriation of not to exceed \$493.17 be made for purchase of materials for stock for the Water Department. Councilman Babcock seconded the motion, which was carried by the following roll call vote: AYES: COUNCILMEN: Babcock, Hitchcock, Murray, Powell and McGuire. NOES: COUNCILMEN: None. ABSENT: COUNCILMEN: None.

Mayor McGuire moved that an appropriation of not to exceed \$358.56 be made for purchase of 6 4" gate valves and 8 6" gate valves for the Water Department. Councilman Babcock seconded the motion, which was carried by the following roll call vote: AYES: COUNCILMEN: Babcock, Hitchcock, Murray, Powell and McGuire. NOES: COUNCILMEN: None. ABSENT: COUNCILMEN: None.

Mayor McGuire moved that an appropriation of not to exceed \$385.93 be made for purchase of materials for stock for the Water Department. Councilman Hitchcock seconded the motion, which was carried by the following roll call vote: AYES: COUNCILMEN: Babcock, Hitchcock, Murray, Powell and McGuire. NOES: COUNCILMEN: None. ABSENT: COUNCILMEN: None.

Mayor McGuire moved that the bid of Title Insurance & Trust Company for the furnishing of preliminary title reports to be used in perfecting title in the City of Torrance to 91 lots to be acquired by tax deeds from the County of Los Angeles be accepted. Councilman Hitchcock seconded the motion, which was carried by the following roll call vote: AYES: COUNCILMEN: Babcock, Hitchcock, Murray, Powell and McGuire. NOES: COUNCILMEN: None. ABSENT: COUNCILMEN: None.

Mayor McGuire announced that the tax deeded property will be available for purchase in the near future.

ORAL COMMUNICATIONS

Mrs. Emma Quaggin, 1609 Amapola Avenue, read portions of the minutes of an Adjourned Regular Meeting of the City Council held June 18, 1940 as follows:

"A communication was read from the Grand Jury, County of Los Angeles, advising that, after going over the matter of an alleged shortage in funds in the City Judge's Department and the Police Department, and after hearing of witnesses and taking of evidence, it had been concluded that the matter does not warrant further consideration by the Grand Jury."

Mrs. Quaggin asked why, in view of the above disposition by the Grand Jury of the case against Robert Lessing, former Judge of the City of Torrance, the City Council insists on persecuting Mr. Lessing.

Councilman Powell answered that he did not see how anyone who is interested in good government can take any other attitude than to appreciate that the Councilmen who voted for dismissal of Mr. Lessing did so in an effort to protect the interests of the City of Torrance. He stated that, as set out in the answer to the recall, Mr. Lessing had been dismissed because of inefficiency, carelessness and negligence in administering the duties of his office.

Mr. Klusman remarked that, at the beginning of the proceedings to dismiss Mr. Lessing, Mayor McGuire had stated that Mr. Lessing's accounts were short, but that he had paid the money back. He said it was definitely understood that if the money was paid back by someone, it must have been taken. Mr. Klusman declared that Councilman Hitchcock had then, at a subsequent meeting, declared Mr. Lessing to be innocent. He asserted further that Councilman Babcock had voted at one meeting to dismiss Mr. Lessing, and at the following meeting, voted to retain him. Mr. Klusman praised Mr. Cotton, proclaiming him to be "a pretty honest man - pretty shrewd - a certified accountant, certified by the State of California." He remarked that, inasmuch as the report rendered by Mr. Cotton covered the period since 1934, several Mayor's had held office during the time, and, he inquired, why had the irregularity never been noticed by the several Mayors. He said that he admired the two Councilmen (indicating Councilmen Murray and Powell) for having the courage to bring the true facts to light. He said further that anyone who would desire to recall the men who had the courage to reveal the facts to the public, and to retain in office the one accused of the felony of misappropriating public funds, could have no other objective than to replace the two men with men who would "keep their mouths shut."

Mr. James O'Toole asked Councilmen Murray and Powell if they had sought the aid of former District Attorney Buron Fitts to instigate a proceedings before the Los Angeles County Grand Jury against the then Judge, Robert Lessing. Mr. O'Toole asked Councilman Murray to answer "yes or no". Councilman Murray answered "yes" and made an attempt to speak further, but was interrupted by Mr. O'Toole. There was a brief period of confusion, during which time Mr. O'Toole, Mrs. O'Toole and Councilman Murray were speaking at the same time.

Mr. O'Toole then asked Councilman Murray if he and other members of the Council had sought the aid of the present District Attorney Dockweiler in the Lessing case.

Councilman Powell answered that the case is before the District Attorney at this time.

Mr. O'Toole maintained that "the life of a man is being tried before the court of public opinion". Councilman Powell objected to this, pointing out that the grounds for dismissal have been stated and informing that Mr. Lessing has not been placed on trial.

Mr. O'Toole declared that the Councilmen responsible for dismissal of Robert Lessing had resorted to the lowest tactics possible, that of besmirching the character of a man in order to effect a dismissal when all other means failed. He said when failure to obtain an indictment before the strictest Grand Jury in the history of Southern California was apparent, no other means had been accessible except to try to bring the man's character into disrepute.

Mr. O'Toole asserted that the City Auditor had refused to remain in the meeting to avoid answering questions, and that he had offered a legal opinion which he is not entitled to offer.

Mr. O'Toole contended that the City Auditor had not stated specific cases in support of his inference that irregularities existed in the records of Robert Lessing. Councilman Murray referred him to the audit report rendered.

Mr. Burdick, 1006 Sartori Avenue, spoke in defense of Robert Lessing. He asserted that the three Councilmen who are principle figures in a recall action in progress at this time are using the Robert Lessing issue to cloud the real issue, to throw up a "smoke screen", thus protecting their own interests. He said a lot of questions, aside from the Robert Lessing issue, would bear answering, and proceeded by asking Councilman Powell if he had attended the convention last year when money was appropriated for this purpose by the Council, or whether he "had stopped by the wayside and visited relatives", as he (Mr. Burdick) had heard. Councilman Powell informed that he had attended the convention, the questioning ending at this point.

Mrs. Charles Turner, 2024 Martina Avenue, censured the assemblage for discourteous conduct when listening to someone speak with whom they may or may not be in full accord. She pointed out that the least an audience can do is extend the common courtesy of listening to both sides of an issue. (Mrs. Turner apparently referred to the loud hissing, noise and laughter which accompanied the speech of Mr. O'Toole and Mr. Burdick, although she did not state her personal views in the matter).

Mr. Hagberg of WALTERIA also spoke in defense of Robert Lessing. He asked Councilmen Murray, Powell and Babcock why it took them three years, seven months to discover that Bob Lessing was inefficient, careless and negligent as stated in their answer to the recall. Councilman Powell informed that it had not taken them that long to find out about it, but had taken that long to get any cooperation. He asked, since all cases are reported in the Torrance Herald, why anyone would desire to dispose of dockets and complaints. He made mention of the statement of the auditor that numerous cases were not properly entered in the Court Dockets, at which time Councilman Powell cited two separate cases in the Court Docket naming Mr. Hagberg as defendant, the record also being incomplete in those two cases. Mr. Powell cited these cases as examples of the careless manner of making entries in the dockets.

In connection with the charge that approximately one-third of the cases heard by Judge Lessing resulted in suspended sentences, Mr. Hagberg asserted that he could recall a number of cases which warranted suspended sentences.

He asked further if it is customary to dismiss employees without affording them the opportunity of presenting their defense through a trial.

Councilman Powell advised that it is within the authority of the City Council to dismiss any appointive employee when proper grounds for dismissal are in existence, which statement was substantiated by City Attorney McCall.

Mr. Hagberg asked Councilman Powell whether or not he had told him (Hagberg) if Bob Lessing (City Judge) and John Stroh (Police Chief) would be dismissed from office if he (Powell) succeeded in being reelected at the last councilmanic election, Councilman Powell's answer being in the affirmative. Mr. Hagberg then asked why Chief of Police Stroh had been retained in his position.

Councilman Powell informed that Chief Stroh had been brought into the matter only because of the \$550.00 which was being held in the Police Department pending investigation of the City Judge's records, but, Councilman Powell advised, Chief Stroh had been a victim of circumstances, it having been proved that Chief Stroh's records are complete and accurate in every respect. He commended Chief Stroh for maintaining his records so accurately, mentioning that any arrest and subsequent fine payment can be checked on Chief Stroh's records with absolutely no question or doubt as to what actually transpired.

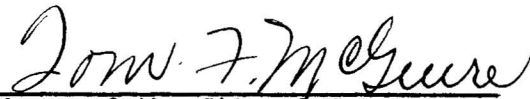
Mr. Krekow, 2203 Carson Street, said that the City of Torrance should have a bookkeeping system so complete that it would be impossible for anyone to carelessly neglect their duties, or to take any amount of money.

Councilman Hitchcock moved all bills properly audited be paid. Councilman Babcock seconded the motion, which was carried by the following roll call vote: AYES: COUNCILMEN: Babcock, Hitchcock, Murray, Powell and McGuire. NOES: COUNCILMEN: None. ABSENT: COUNCILMEN: None.

At 10:00 P.M., upon motion of Councilman Hitchcock, seconded by Councilman Babcock, the meeting adjourned to Monday, May 19, 1941 at 4:45 P.M.


City Clerk of the City of Torrance

APPROVED:


Mayor of the City of Torrance